

## Building a Communion

Preparations for the

European meeting have begun in Wrocław, with gatherings in the city and its surroundings. Teams are being formed in each parish to inform the inhabitants of the city about the meeting, to find accommodations, to prepare the animation of the mornings spent in the parishes during the European meeting.

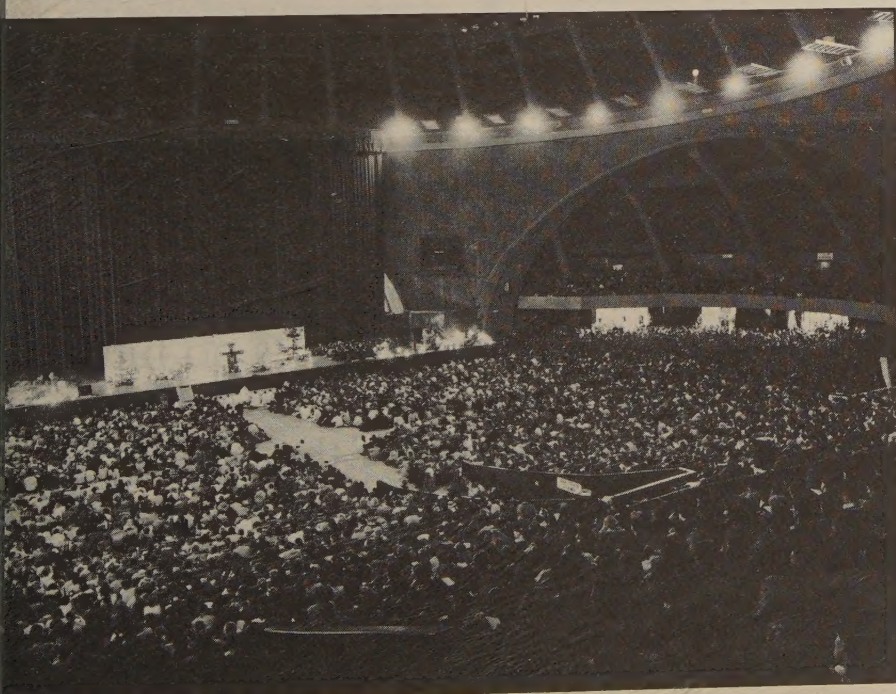
Young people from Wrocław were present each week in Taizé throughout the summer. They expressed their joy at being able to welcome others. Not only will the hospitality in families be very warm, but from what the young people said much vitality will be discovered in the groups found in each parish.

Some described the new situation in their neighbourhood and the efforts they have been making to be attentive to the poorest:

"During the European meeting six years ago, our parish offered hospitality to more than 1000 persons. Since then, two new parishes have been created in new districts of the town. It is exciting not just to see the churches being built, but especially to be present at a time when

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Prayer service during the first meeting in Wrocław 1989/90



**Taizé**  
European Meeting  
of Young Adults  
28 December 1995  
- 1 January 1996  
**Wrocław**

THE SUMMER IN TAIZÉ

## An Inner Adventure

Each year in Taizé the weeks from July to September are the richest with respect to the diversity of countries and backgrounds represented. The meetings of young adults that succeed one another offer many people the possibility of taking part in an inner adventure structured by times of prayer together. And gradually one thing becomes clear: following Christ means discovering a communion with many others.

Knowing that we share the same foundations is a source of deep-seated peace and provides a basis for the understanding necessary to listen to others and to accept them as they are in spite of differences of all kinds. This helps each of us to discover the energy and the desire to give ourselves more fully.

Every day, people come together to pray through singing and in silence. Praying together helps us realize that, beyond our fatigue and all the barriers of language and background, it is already possible to be one in God's presence, listening to his Word and singing his praises. That is the source of the happiness and the openness that can be seen on the faces of so many young people as the days pass, people who were once strangers but who have now become friends.

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Christians are beginning to form a visible and hospitable community. Since the last European meeting, the weekly prayer in Wrocław has not ceased. For several of us this prayer is a strong support for our involvements, especially for our work with children from families undergoing great difficulties. We help them with their homework, without forgetting to offer them free times and holidays when possible. Others among us help by serving meals to poor people, particularly to the elderly."

**A**n article in the diocesan newspaper of Wrocław recalls the joy of welcoming others six years ago. Here is the text:

### Simple Human Hospitality

Slowly the European meeting of young adults is coming closer, the second one held in Wrocław. Some parishes have already begun to prepare. Before getting caught up in what lies before us, let us return for a few moments to the winter of 1989-1990. Perhaps we still have before our eyes the tens of thousands of young adults from almost all the countries of Europe, with large backpacks, a bit tired but happy and always ready to celebrate. We remember the crowds praying in the cathedral, in our churches, in the *Hala Ludowa*, as well as in the four circus tents where they sat on strong-smelling straw. We remember the scouts who prepared tea in enormous kitchens on wheels. We remember the trams that sometimes took unexpected detours to bring those who had lost their way back home. We may still have photos of those we invited, taken before they left. And we remember very well the impression of being witnesses of an important event. Yes, that meeting could be considered a great event, but the most important thing was what happened in people's hearts, what touched each person who was caught up in that whirlwind of joy.

Coming from throughout Europe, the young participants marvelled at the hospitality of the people of Wrocław. Some young Germans, for example, explained how they were able to remain outdoors the whole day of the welcome in spite of the bitter cold: "When we were preparing the welcome for those who speak German, at five o'clock in the morning, a woman came out of the building near the school where we were working with a plate of glasses and hot tea. And she did that the whole day long. We never saw anything like it! That woman never even told us to be sure not to break the glasses...!" Some Italians spoke in the same way: "The people welcomed us very warmly. In spite of the serious economic problems Poland was going

through, the families gave all of themselves and did it wholeheartedly."

Simple human hospitality became for a great many people a way to discover God. Generosity opened people's hearts. A simple prayer and short periods of silence quenched the thirst of many of the young in a Europe in great effervescence. For many, particularly for those coming from the East, it was the first time they had ever seen churches full of people. Aniela and Nelle from Ukraine remember that with emotion: "We never saw so many young people from all over the world arrive in a city to pray, sing or simply to keep silence."

That was the European meeting six

years ago. What will the second one be like? What kind of city will the tens of thousands of young Europeans looking for trust, reconciliation and brotherhood find? What will this next step in the pilgrimage of trust mean for our local church of Wrocław, for our parish communities? A festival of prayer and joy? Of course. A new impetus? Yes, perhaps a new beginning made possible by the discovery of the newness found in the Gospel.

Even if we know well that our dear Wrocław is no longer the same city it was six years ago, we shall remember what touched our guests the most - joyful and welcoming hearts.

The bishop of Hiroshima invited the Taizé Community to lead a prayer vigil for peace with young people in his cathedral during the night of August 5-6, fifty years after the atomic bomb was dropped on that city. A brother was present and Brother Roger sent this prayer, which was meditated on at the same time in Hiroshima and in Taizé:

**G**od of every human being, in a world where we are taken aback at the incomprehensible suffering of the innocent, enable us to allow others to perceive a reflection of your compassion by the lives we lead. Risen Jesus, the astonishing thing about your Gospel is that you always come to us. Wherever we may be at, you are always waiting for us. And we understand that, without forgiveness, without reconciliation, there is no future for our own selves, no future for the nations of the earth. We want to be among those who alleviate human suffering and trials.







**A**t the heart of the Christian faith we find the astonishing proclamation of a "crucified Christ," which Saint Paul calls "a stumbling-block for the Jews and foolishness for the Gentiles" (1 Cor 1,23), but which represents for him the gateway to enter the mystery of a God of love. Let us try to approach this enigmatic "message of the cross" by a series of approximations that will help us to discern its contours.

At first sight, we see in the cross the sign of a **failure, humanly speaking**. "He saved other people, and he cannot save himself!" (Mark 15,31). These words of the authorities of the nation when they saw Jesus on the cross are not merely an indication of their bad faith. They have a point: how could someone who claims to be the Mess-

ment." And in the Hebrew Scriptures, there is one text that could not fail to attract their attention, for it expresses this logic of transfiguration marvellously. The "Song of God's Servant" in Isaiah 53 speaks of someone whose life appears to be a failure, and who even seems to be cursed: "we thought of him as someone being punished and struck with affliction by God." In fact he was innocent: "ours were the sufferings he was bearing" (Isa 53,4). Even more, his apparent failure had a hidden motivation: "by his wounds we have been healed" (Isa 53,5). And at the end of the chant, the true meaning of the Servant's life is revealed, and he is raised up by God (Isa 53,11-12).

Read in the light of Jesus' resurrection, this text helps to situate the mystery of the

fering he made no threats..." (1 Peter 2,23). Jesus was truly God's Servant (1 Peter 2,22-25); he placed his trust in the creative power of the Lord rather than in the apparent strength of destruction (Isa 50,6-7).

And finally, the death of the Servant who "takes upon himself the sins of others" (Isa 53,11) is shown to be a **gift of self** to the very end. In that way, it reveals fully the identity of the one who came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life..." (Mark 10,45). And in revealing fully the Son, it simultaneously reveals the Father (cf. Matt 11,27): God is the perfect Giver, the Source of life. The cross shows us, in the words of Saint John, that "God is love" (1 John 4,8.16).

Love is a word often misused, often reduced to a platitude, but here Jesus reveals

## *The Message of the Cross*

iah sent by God to save his people end up in this way? For such a death was not only a particularly painful and shameful form of torture; for the Jews, it was a sign of rejection by God (Deut 21,23). Saint Paul himself uses the same argument while giving it a different twist: "He was cursed for our sake" (Gal 3,13).

The same idea can be expressed in a more positive manner. In our world, often the efforts of those who work for good seem unfortunately to be useless in the face of the power of evil. A Gandhi, a Martin Luther King struggled valiantly against hatred and oppression before becoming victims of destructive violence in their turn. Could not the death of Jesus be along those same lines, a proof of the **powerlessness of good**? Jesus said something similar in his judgement of the leaders of his people: prophets and righteous persons are always put to death (Matt 23,29-36).

This way of interpreting the message of the cross, comprehensible though it may be on one level, comes up against a major obstacle: the discovery of the empty tomb by the women and the disciples' conviction that "Christ is risen!" Death did not have the last word and so the message of the cross needs to be reinterpreted in the new context; it is transfigured by the light of the resurrection.

To facilitate this reinterpretation, the first Christians benefitted from one main source: the Scriptures, our "Old Testa-

ment." It explains it first of all as an **act of solidarity**. God does not save humankind "from on high" by a feat of magic that drops down from heaven. On the contrary, Christ shares fully the human condition, going down to its very lowest point, "down to death on a cross" (Phil 2,8). Jesus shows this intention by the first act of his public life, his baptism. John had announced the coming of someone "more powerful... [who] will baptize in the Holy Spirit and in fire" (Matt 3,11). But Jesus comes as an ordinary human being and asks John to baptize him. In other words, he places himself intentionally alongside sinners looking for forgiveness. Healing can only come from within the human condition, transforming it imperceptibly but irresistibly, like the yeast that slowly causes the entire loaf to rise (Matt 13,33).

The resurrection gave believers the assurance that love was stronger than hatred and violence. The cross can therefore be understood as the **authentic response to evil**. In the great discourse that inaugurated his ministry, Jesus taught the disciples another way of living, in the image of their heavenly Father. The new way was that of responding to evil with good, instead of reacting by taking up the same weapons as one's opponent (Matt 5,43-48). And so, at the time of the greatest trial in his life, Jesus acted in the same way: "He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was suf-

fering he made no threats..." (1 Peter 2,23). Jesus was truly God's Servant (1 Peter 2,22-25); he placed his trust in the creative power of the Lord rather than in the apparent strength of destruction (Isa 50,6-7). And finally, the death of the Servant who "takes upon himself the sins of others" (Isa 53,11) is shown to be a **gift of self** to the very end. In that way, it reveals fully the identity of the one who came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life..." (Mark 10,45). And in revealing fully the Son, it simultaneously reveals the Father (cf. Matt 11,27): God is the perfect Giver, the Source of life. The cross shows us, in the words of Saint John, that "God is love" (1 John 4,8.16). Love is a word often misused, often reduced to a platitude, but here Jesus reveals

its true meaning: "There is no greater love than to give one's life for those one loves" (John 15,13; cf. 13,1). By summing up his entire life as an act of self-giving on the cross, by consenting to submit to violence out of love for us, Jesus transformed the meaning of suffering and death from within: they became the road to the fullness of life. Henceforth we are sure to find God not by fleeing from what upsets us but at the heart of our trials, for Christ has taken them up and integrated them into the "yes" he spoke to the loving will of the Father (cf. Mark 14,36). Jesus ends his life by going from the torture of the cross to the life of resurrection. When we walk in his footsteps, we begin from the other side. "I want to know Christ," writes Saint Paul, "and the power of his resurrection." Transformed by that love greater than death, I will then be able to share his sufferings in the service of my brothers and sisters, dying with him so as finally to enter fully into the life of resurrection (Phil 3,10-11). Our participation in the resurrection enables us, in our turn, to give our lives out of love. In this way the message of the cross, at first a stumbling-block and foolishness, becomes the power and wisdom of God. It is revealed as the only truly effective way to life, the way of a love that disarms all our refusals without doing violence to us, by transforming them from within.



# MEDITATING ON THE WORD NOVEMBER

*These short readings proposed for reflection are taken from the midday prayer in Taizé. The reference shows where the text was taken from. Sometimes a longer reading is given, for those who wish to set the text in its context.*

## JOHANNINE HOURS

LUKE 5,1-11

*Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.*

**1 Wed ALL SAINTS** Mt 5,1-12  
Jesus said: Happy are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be filled. Happy are the merciful, for mercy will be shown to them.

**2 Thu** Is 25,6-9  
The Lord has destroyed the veil of mourning that enfolded all peoples. He has swallowed up death forever.

**3 Fri** Gn 50,15-21  
Joseph forgave his brothers saying: Do not be afraid; is it for me to put myself in God's place? The harm you planned to do me has, by God's design, been turned to good.

**4 Sat** Ps 5  
At daybreak, Lord, you hear my voice. In the morning I offer my prayer and fix my eyes on you.

**5 SUN** Lk 19,1-10  
Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Jesus as he passed. Jesus said to him: "Come down. Hurry, because I am to stay at your house today." And he hurried down and welcomed him joyfully.

**6 Mon** Ep 3,14-21  
May God strengthen you in your inner being through his Spirit, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

**7 Tue** 1 Co 13,1-13  
Love is patient and kind, love is not jealous, boastful or conceited. Love does not seek its own advantage, it does not take offence or harbour grievances. Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth.

**8 Wed** Is 61,1-4  
The Lord sent me to comfort all who mourn, to clothe them in festive garments instead of despondency.

**9 Thu** Gn 12,1-5  
The Lord said to Abraham, "Leave your country, your kinsfolk and your father's house for the land I will show you." And Abraham set out, as the Lord had told him.

**10 Fri** 2 Co 5,13-17  
Christ died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died and was raised to life for them.

**11 Sat** Mt 4,12-17  
Jesus said: Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.

**12 SUN** 2 Th 2,16-3,5  
May our Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father who has given us his love and, through his grace, such ceaseless encouragement and sure hope, encourage and strengthen you in every good word and deed.

**13 Mon** Lk 11,9-13  
Jesus said: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

**14 Tue** Ps 130  
My soul is waiting for the Lord, I rely on his promise; my soul relies on the Lord more than a night-watchman on the coming of dawn.

**15 Wed** Is 58,5-12  
Thus says the Lord: Is that the sort of fast that pleases me: hanging your head like a bending reed? Is not rather this the fast that pleases me: breaking unjust fetters, setting free the oppressed and sharing your food with the hungry?

**16 Thu** Ph 1,27-30  
St. Paul writes: Stand firm, one in mind and spirit, striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel.

**17 Fri** Si 27,30-28,7  
Forgive your neighbour any wrongs. For if someone nurses anger against another, how can they then ask for healing from God?

**18 Sat** 2 Tm 1,6-11  
Paul writes to Timothy: Share in my sufferings for the Gospel, relying on the power of God who has saved us and called us to be holy.

**19 SUN** Lk 21,5-19  
Jesus said to his disciples: You will be persecuted because of my name. But make up your mind not to worry about how to defend yourselves, for I shall give you words and wisdom.

**20 Mon** Dt 30,15-20  
Choose life: loving the Lord your God, listening to his voice, holding fast to him — for in this your life consists.

**21 Tue** Ps 42  
In the day, God sends his faithful love, and even at night the song it inspires in me is a prayer to the God of my life.

**22 Wed** 1 Jn 2,3-11  
Anyone who loves his brother lives in the light and need not be afraid of stumbling.

**23 Thu** Jm 1,12-15  
Let no one say when they are tempted, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.

**24 Fri** Heb 2,5-18  
Because Christ himself suffered when he was put to the test, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

**25 Sat** Jl 9,5b-37  
The Lord says: Come back to me with all your heart. Come back to the Lord your God for he is tender and compassionate, and rich in faithful love.

**26 SUN** Lk 23,33-46  
The criminal crucified next to Jesus, said to him, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

**27 Mon** Dt 4,29-31  
You will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him if you search for him with all your heart and all your soul.

**28 Tue** Jn 15,9-17  
Jesus said: You did not choose me. No, I chose you, and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit.

**29 Wed** Rm 15,1-6  
May the God of perseverance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves following the example of Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and one voice you may glorify God.

**30 Thu** Mt 4,18-22  
St ANDREW  
Jesus saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." And at once they left their nets and followed him.

The story of the miraculous catch of fish shows us the different stages of an encounter with Christ. Everything begins as if by chance. Jesus sees a fishing boat that will allow him to go out on the lake so that the people on the shore can hear him better. Peter, the boat's owner, allows his work to be disturbed by Jesus. But anyone else would have been capable of doing the same thing. Peter only does what politeness and kindness require.

Then Jesus stops talking to the crowd and speaks personally to Peter. By telling him to fish in the daytime, he challenges him. If he agrees to Jesus' request, Peter will be running a risk and even doing something contrary to common sense, because fishermen do their work at night. He does not hide his first reaction of hesitation, but then he agrees and trusts Christ's words without understanding them fully. And he still does not understand when he sees the nets fill to overflowing. God's gift is beyond measure.

This overflowing gift enables him to sense the mystery of Christ. He no longer calls him "Master," as in v.5, but rather "Lord" (v.8). He realizes that with Christ, it is all or nothing. From the master he learned what it was good to do, but standing before his Lord, he is overcome. He does not think that he is up to the mark: what could he give in return to the one who has given everything? But Jesus tells him, "Don't be afraid" (v.10). Peter will henceforth work with Christ in gathering together in a communion human beings who are scattered. If Jesus expresses this in the language of fishermen: "you will be catching people" (v.10), that is perhaps because he wants to reassure him about his former work: his experience as a fisherman will not be lost in this new life, when he leaves everything behind to follow Christ.

- What services can we perform for Christ today?
- In what way does Christ ask me to trust in him even when I cannot understand?
- Am I able to tell Christ that he is the whole of my life?



# MEDITATING ON THE WORD DECEMBER

*These short readings proposed for reflection are taken from the midday prayer in Taizé. The reference shows where the text was taken from. Sometimes a longer reading is given, for those who wish to set the text in its context.*

## JOHANNINE HOURS

MATTHEW 25,1-12

*Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.*

**1 Fri** You who revere the Lord, trust in him, await his good gifts: everlasting joy and mercy.

Sl 2,1-11

**2 Sat** The Lord says: I shall put my law deep within them, I shall write it on their hearts. I shall be their God and they will be my people.

Jr 31,31-34

**3 SUN ADVENT** Paul writes: Let us put aside the deeds of darkness. Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rm 13,11-14

**4 Mon** The Lord says to his people: Look and see the joy that is coming to you from God.

Ba 4,36-37

**5 Tue** Forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Ep 4,25-32

**6 Wed** God says: Love the foreigners among you as you love yourselves.

Lv 19,33-34

**7 Thu** St. Paul writes: Though there seemed no hope, Abraham hoped and believed, being fully convinced that God is able to do what he has promised.

Rm 4,18-25

**8 Fri** Mary said to the angel: I am the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.

Lk 1,26-38

**9 Sat** Paul writes: I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the communion in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Ph 3,4-14

**10 SUN** Isaiah said: God's Spirit will be upon the Messiah. He will not judge by appearances, but he will judge the weak with justice and give fair sentence for the humble in the land.

Is 11,1-10

**11 Mon** The Lord says: Seek me and you shall live. Let justice flow like water, and righteousness like an unfailing stream.

Am 5,4-24

**12 Tue** God says: I am the Beginning and the End. I shall give water from the well of life freely to anyone who is thirsty.

Rv 21,5-7

**13 Wed** If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we are in communion with one another.

1 Jn 1,5-7

**14 Thu** Jesus said: It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples.

Jn 13,31-35

**15 Fri** In Christ, God has reconciled us to himself and entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation.

2 Co 5,18-21

**16 Sat** You do well to pay attention to the word of the prophets, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

2 P 1,19-21

**17 SUN** James writes: Be patient; do not lose heart, for the Lord's coming will be soon. Do not complain about one another.

Jm 5,7-11

**18 Mon** Jesus said: I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark but will have the light of life.

Jn 8,12

**19 Tue** May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

2 Th 3,1-5

**20 Wed** The angel said to Mary: Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

Lk 1,26-38

**21 Thu** Christ Jesus was never Yes-and-No; his nature is all Yes. For in him is found the Yes to all God's promises.

2 Co 1,18-22

**22 Fri** Mary said: The Lord's merciful love stretches from age to age upon those who revere him.

Lk 1,39-56

**23 Sat** Love one another deeply, from the heart.

1 P 1,22-25

**24 SUN** The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means "God-with-us".

Mt 1,18-23

**25 Mon CHRISTMAS** The Word became flesh and lived among us. From his fullness we have all received.

Jn 1,9-18

**26 Tue ST STEPHEN** God wanted all his fullness to dwell in Christ, and through him to reconcile all things to himself.

Col 1,15-20

**27 Wed ST JOHN** God's love for us has been shown in this way: God sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through him.

1 Jn 4,7-12

**28 Thu** Should our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.

1 Jn 3,16-24

**29 Fri** Above all else, watch over your heart, for it is the well-spring of life.

Pr 4,23

**30 Sat** Peter asked Jesus, "How many times should I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "Not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Mt 18,21-22

**31 SUN** May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together in one Body. Live in thankfulness.

Col 3,12-17

When Jesus began to "manifest his glory" in Cana of Galilee, he took part in a wedding celebration and made sure it was not disturbed by the lack of wine (John 2). Earlier, the prophets had proclaimed the "joy of the bridegroom" that God would feel for his beloved people (cf. Isa 62,5). Jesus himself compares the time of the encounter with God to a wedding, in order to emphasize that God is happy to love and he draws those he loves into his joy. The story of ten girls invited to a wedding feast follows along the same lines: Christian life involves going to meet the one we love (the "bridegroom," says the parable).

The girls going out with their lamps perhaps echo the excitement of the first Christians as they expected the Kingdom to come very soon. But then time passes: "the bridegroom was late" (v.5). The world is not changing; the festival that was to console the afflicted and restore dignity to the victims of injustice seems far away. The time of waiting becomes burdensome. The ten girls grow drowsy, just as the disciples, invited to stay alert, fell asleep out of sadness (Luke 22,45).

The lamps that the girls lit stand for prayer. Even today candles before icons or on the altar continue the custom of the early Christians: during their celebrations that lasted "until the middle of the night; a number of lamps were lit in the upstairs room where we were assembled" (Acts 20,7-8). But what is the oil that causes the lamps to burn? The five girls who have enough oil cannot share it with the others. Without claiming to give a definitive reply, we would not be wrong to think of the Holy Spirit here. He keeps on watching and praying in us, even when we become drowsy. Whoever waits with love can say, "I am asleep, but my heart is alert" (Song of Songs 5,2). But nobody can accustom their heart to an intimacy with the Holy Spirit in the place of another.

- What am I waiting for in my life; in what direction would I like to go?
- How can prayer alone or with others sustain our waiting for an event of God?
- How can we always be ready for an encounter with God?



each region those who are preparing to take part in the European meeting could meet several times, not just to organize the practical details but to see how others could be invited to join them and to reflect together.

Prayer is at the heart of the preparation, so it is essential for each meeting to begin or end with a time of prayer together. An earlier **Letter from Taizé** gave some practical tips for organizing regular prayers in parishes or for groups of young people.

There are some questions that may help to stimulate reflection during the preparatory meetings. Two or three can be used each time:

What motivates me to set out towards other Christians who are far away? Am I ready to take a similar step towards those who are nearby?

Who can I set out with? Who do I know around me who would be happy to take part in this stage of the "pilgrimage of trust?" How can I propose it to other people beyond my circle of friends and acquaintances?

What ways can I find for my local Christian community to take part in the adventure of this pilgrimage?

How can I prepare myself to see the best of what the people I meet have to share with me? How can I change my way of looking at others already now?

Can I take a time of silence now and then to review my life, to pray simply while listening to God, and to see what consequences the "pilgrimage of trust" has in my daily life?

Do I see around me persons and groups who help to create trust, to bring about reconciliation? Would it be possible to gather some of their experiences to share with those who will be welcoming me in Wroclaw, perhaps with some photos?

Are there groups or families in our area who have recently arrived from Poland or from Eastern Europe and who could help us understand the challenges faced by those living there?

The pilgrimage to Wroclaw calls for an inner attitude of openness, of attentiveness to others. How can I begin by opening myself to those who need me here and now?

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# Anticipating a Communion

In all the groups, one of the brothers of the community gives an introduction each morning on the wellsprings of faith, based on Bible texts that he explains. The starting-point for each participant may be different, but this common search for the sources of trust places them all before the same essential reality.

Following the rhythm of the holidays in each country, the weeks take on different tones: each time there is a new balance between Latin, Baltic, Slavic, Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian peoples. Three, four or five thousand participants are present per week. The centre and east of Europe are well represented; for them the journey is particularly difficult. There is always a good representation of Romanians, on account of the regularity of their four weekly shuttle buses. The Lithuanians are particularly numerous, and this is all the more surprising since their country is so small. More than twenty coaches from Russia came this summer, making the fifty-four hour journey from Moscow. And for the small group that came from Novosibirsk, Moscow was only the half-way point!

Each participant is invited to continue their searching at home after their stay. They are not asked to follow a programme or a method, but to be more aware of the inner life within them, of their ability to create with others and of their solidarity with the community of the Church, which is both a support and the place where they can live out reconciliation in a concrete fashion.

This summer saw the presence of several groups from Albania, of Bosnian refugee children who have come for the third consecutive summer, of a young widower from Rwanda who now lives in the village with his three children, of the bishop of Shanghai and of two young men from his diocese who stayed for two months. These visits made us more aware of all those across the earth today who are undergoing trials.

As in other years, Church leaders joined the young people meeting on the hill. They listened and shared their own concerns. Among them were bishops from the Anglican and Lutheran churches, including the Bishop of Stockholm who came with 150 young people from his diocese. Cardinal Lustiger of Paris was present for the vigil of the Feast of the Transfiguration on August 5th, and that evening a brother from Zaïre made his life-commitment in the community. On the same evening, a brother of Taizé was in Hiroshima to lead a prayer in the cathedral, fifty years after the atomic bomb was dropped on that city. The end of the summer was also marked by five new brothers who entered the community on five successive Saturdays, three of them from Asia.

*A group of young Italians went to Sarajevo this summer. After a time of preparation in their parishes, they set out like pilgrims, with empty hands, to tell the people of Sarajevo that they are not forgotten.*

*In reading their account, each person can ask themselves how they too can live a pilgrimage of trust in their own situation. All of us receive the same inner invitation to set out, although not necessarily to travel far away; our pilgrimage may be quite close to home. By taking the risk of letting others show them hospitality, pilgrims anticipate a communion: they know they can find a welcome as if they were in their own family.*

## Pilgrims to Sarajevo

Going as pilgrims to Sarajevo: when we spoke of this dream during the youth pilgrimage our diocese made to Assisi a year ago, we did not think a lot about the risks, the itinerary, the means of travel...

We simply set out, knowing that the road would be much longer than the thousand kilometres that separate us from that symbolic city. Our communities, city, friends and families were important stages on this journey of peace. We wanted to start out from our everyday history to join a history that seemed to be taking place far over our heads, with its indescribable horror. We began our journey with the desire to encounter people outside of their positions and their roles, to listen and to share.

There were months of enthusiasm and of disappointment, of joy and of fatigue, of discoveries and of doubts, of coming together and of breaking up. Before leaving, one of our greatest fears concerned the real usefulness of the gesture.

## The Answer Would Come If We Took the Step

More than once the question came up, either from others or from ourselves: "Why? Why now? Is it really worth risking our lives for this? Are we the only ones who want it, or is there someone greater behind it?"

We realized that the answer would only come if we actually took the step, setting out with trust. And so, at the beginning of August, we left Brescia for Bosnia: twenty-four pilgrims full of doubts and fears, but sustained by the confidence that they were not alone. Mostar, Kresevo, Sarajevo were stages on our journey; we discovered faces and stories

of people who communicated to us their great desire to live in spite of everything.

Many images have remained with us: flowers and cakes in the middle of ruins, children still being born, people who wanted to meet and leave their homes. We arrived with empty hands; our presence in the midst of these people was welcomed with respect and emotion like a tiny sign of "normal life" in the daily chaos of war.

During the pilgrimage the link with Brescia was essential. While we were on the road, another group of young people was making a pilgrimage in the different sectors of our diocese, to pray together, to meet people, to share about the need for creating peace starting from our daily lives.

Now that we have returned home, we see that our pilgrimage was a starting point. We are now aware that there is not the great history of nations on the one hand, and on the other the little history of everyday life, the history of others and our own history. All of history is a challenge for us.

That is why we feel we are called not just to live as spectators, but to enter ourselves into the sufferings and the wounds that our world is undergoing. We do not have the illusion that we can solve the problems, but we know that great dreams come true starting from the tiny steps that each person can take.

## North America

During October and November, two Taizé brothers will be in North America for prayers, visits and meetings in the New York-New England area. For information call Taizé (212) 246-0029. Visits are also planned on the West Coast (San Francisco...) for early 1996. Contact the Taizé Community in France for details.

## Letter from Taizé

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